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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: VOTING OVER, ELECTIONS FAR FROM DONE

REF: A. PRISTINA 477  
[1](#)B. PRISTINA 492  
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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kosovo held runoff mayoral elections in 21 municipalities on December 13. According to early comments from election observers -- including 17 teams of Embassy observers -- the election process was generally fair and transparent, but there are allegations of isolated irregularities. Preliminary results from the Central Elections Commission (CEC) show that the Prime Minister's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leads in 11 municipalities. The President's Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) leadQin five races, and leading opposition party the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) leads in three. The Serb Independent Liberal Party (SLS) has a commanding lead in its race against PDK in the Serb-majority municipality of Shterpce/Strpce. An independent candidate, Rufki Suma won in Hani i Elezit/Djeneral Jankovic, a new municipality holding elections for the first time. Close races in Lipjan/Lipljan, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Prizren show that there are more uncounted conditional ballots than the vote difference between the candidates; PDK leads LDK in each of these races.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Political parties have 48 hours following the close of the polls to file complaints with the independent Elections Complaints and Appeals Commission (ECAC), which has not yet received any complaints. We expect the LDK to file complaints in regard to its close election defeats against the PDK, and this may yet add increased tension to a already fragile relations between the two coalition partners. It is still too early to conduct a final analysis of the 2007 municipal elections, but it appears that PDK remains the dominant political party in Kosovo; the LDK is bouncing back after disastrous elections in 2007; and, the AAK, after victory in Suhareka/Suva Reka can now call itself a national political party. All of this will set the stage for interesting national politics early next year as all parties reassess their interests and relative positions. High Serb turnout in Shterpce/Strpce reinforces a trend of growing Serb engagement with Kosovo institutions. A table of results follows in paragraph [1](#)11. END SUMMARY

ELECTIONS PROCEED SMOOTHLY AMID SOME IRREGULARITIES

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13. (SBU) Kosovo held runoff mayoral elections December 13 for 21 municipalities where no candidate received a majority during the first round of elections on November 15. The Central Elections Commission (CEC) reported to us that there were no major disruptions to the process, and more than 98 percent of polling stations opened according to plan. As expected, turnout was down compared to the first round, with 376,337 voters (37.87% of the voters list) turning out at the polls compared to 449,537 voters (45.23%) during the first round in the same 21 municipalities.

14. (SBU) International, domestic, and Embassy observers reported no significant irregularities on election day. In a statement to the media on December 13, the Kosovo NGO coalition Democracy in Action, which had observers at each of the polling stations, assessed that the electoral process was generally credible and in accordance with universal standards for free elections. That said, irregularities did occur. Observers from the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) told us that they were concerned about several instances across the country where one polling station in a polling center holding multiple stations featured significantly larger turnout than the other stations. Embassy observers also noticed the same phenomenon in some locations throughout the day.

15. (SBU) There were also indications that some polling locations in Novoborde/Novo Brdo -- recently expanded according to the Ahtisaari Plan to include more Serbs -- prevented Serbs who were not on the voters list from casting conditional ballots and turned away some Serbs who presented IDs not issued by Kosovo or UNMIK. In general, though, the various observer missions saw no signs of widespread fraud, and ENEMO's monitoring director in Kosovo, Darko Aleksov from Macedonia, remarked to us on December 15 that Kosovo's elections --

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to his surprise, and apparent lament -- surpassed Macedonia's most recent elections in fairness and process.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS SHOW CLOSE RACES

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16. (SBU) The CEC released preliminary results (not including conditional ballots) in the early hours of December 14. According to these initial results, Prime Minister Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) was the big winner, leading its opponents in 11 mayor's offices. Coalition partner the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) is ahead in five races, and Ramush Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) leads in three runoffs. The Serb Independent Liberal Party (SLS) won in Shterpce/Strpce municipality, and independent candidate Rufki Suma won in Hani i Elezit/Djeneral Jankovic municipality (see table of provisional results at paragraph eleven).

17. (SBU) For now, these results are nothing more than a preliminary canvas of polling stations. The CEC has yet to count conditional ballots, and the number of conditional ballots cast in three municipalities -- Lipjan/Lipljan, Prizren, and Rahovec/Orahovac -- exceeds the difference in votes between the two candidates. In each of these cases, the races feature a PDK candidate leading a tight race against an LDK opponent. LDK is attempting to discredit the results, alleging fraud and duplicate Results and Reconciliation Forms, and we expect to see recounts at several polling stations around the country. As LDK pursues its claims in these close races against PDK, we can also expect to see increasing tensions in the strained relationship between these two central government coalition partners.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE COMING DAYS

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18. (SBU) Political parties have 48 hours after the close of polls to lodge a complaint with the independent Election Complaints and Appeals Commission (ECAC). The ECAC had received no complaints as of noon on December 14, but we expect to see parties file a number of complaints prior to the deadline. The ECAC must publish a decision on complaints within five days of receipt. The CEC can

certify results once the ECAC and the Constitutional Court have resolved all outstanding complaints and appeals. At a very minimum, we do not expect to see final, certified results until the week of December 21, and the likelihood of recounts and investigations suggests that it may take several weeks for the CEC to certify the results of these runoffs.

COMMENT: WHAT THE PROVISIONAL RESULTS TELL US

¶9. (SBU) It is still too early to wrap up Kosovo's 2009 municipal elections. There are still too many close races that may yet change once all of the ballots are tabulated and rechecked, and complaints and challenges addressed. Generally, it appears that PDK is still the dominant political party in Kosovo, at this point winning or leading in 16 of the 36 mayoral races. LDK rebounded from its crushing defeat in 2007 and looks like it will win a minimum of 7 municipalities, including critical pickups in Kamenice/Kamenica and Obilic. And, depending how the conditional ballots fall over the next few days, LDK could pick up another two or three municipalities at PDK's expense. AAK has increased its number of mayor's offices from three to seven, a result that demonstrates it can compete throughout the country, not just in Ramush Haradinaj's Western Kosovo back yard. There is little doubt that parties are already reassessing their relative strengths based on returns from both rounds of elections, and discussions between parties are likely to commence soon after the new year. A government reshuffle and/or early general elections cannot be ruled out.

¶10. (SBU) SLS added to its credibility with victory in Shterpce/Strpce and will field mayors in three Serb-majority municipalities, including the newly decentralized municipalities of Kllokot/Klokot and Gracanice/Gracanica. In the other Ahtisaari municipalities, a Serb won in Ranillug/Ranilug, and an Albanian won in Novoberde/Novo Brdo. While the Novoberde/Novo Brdo result is unfortunate, it may have been unavoidable given that municipality's

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evenly split demographic composition, and it does not diminish from the positive steps we have seen in Kosovo Serb engagement with Kosovo institutions. The 4355 Serb voters that cast ballots for the SLS in Shterpce/Strpce on December 13 far outstrips the number of Serbs who participated in elections nationwide in 2007. With a generally sound electoral process and increasing Serb participation, these elections look like a part of Kosovo's success story.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

¶11. (U) The following is a tabulation of provisional results from the 21 mayoral runoffs held on Sunday, December 13. These results do not include uncounted conditional ballots and are subject to change. Municipalities where conditional ballots exceed the difference between the parties are marked with a star (\*).

Municipality	First Place Party (%)	Second Place Party (%)
Gjilan/Gnjilane	PDK (51.4)	LDK (48.6)
Dragash/Dragas	PDK (53.3)	LDK (46.7)
Istog/Istok	LDK (70.8)	AAK (29.2)
Kacanik	PDK (57.9)	AAK (42.1)
Klina	PDK (56.3)	AAK (43.7)
Kamenica	LDK (54.1)	PDK (45.9)
Mitrovica	PDK (53.0)	AKR (47.0)
*Lipjan/Lipljan	PDK (50.5)	LDK (49.5)
Novo Brdo/Novoberde	LDK (80.9)	SNSD (19.1)
Obilic	LDK (51.9)	PDK (48.1)
*Rahovec/Orahovac	PDK (50.8)	LDK (49.2)
Peje/Pec	AAK (76.7)	LDD (23.3)
Podujeve/Podujevo	LDK (66.5)	PDK (33.5)
*Prizren	PDK (50.0)	LDK (50.0)
Shterpce/Strpce	SLS (65.0)	PDK (35.0)
Suhareka/Suva Reka	AAK (52.4)	PDK (47.6)
Viti/Vitina	PDK (55.2)	LDD (44.8)

Vushtrri/Vucitrn	PDK (63.5)	AAK (36.5)
Malisheve/Malisevo	PDK (61.8)	LDK (38.2)
Junik	AAK (56.7)	LDK (43.3)
Hani i Elezit	Suma (53.3)	PDK (46.7)

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